

PLANNING PRIMER FOR DARIEN

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Overview

This booklet has been prepared for Darien residents and other persons interested in the formulation of the 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Darien, Connecticut. The following pages are intended to provide general background information and an overview of:

- planning and the planning process, and
- Plans of Conservation and Development.

Introduction To Planning

At its most basic level, planning is a process for making informed decisions about the future. Every so often, it makes sense for a community to evaluate the conditions and trends affecting the community and make informed decisions about how it should approach the future in order to:

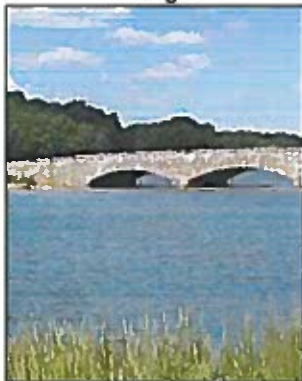
- protect things which are important to the community, and
- attain the things which will enhance the overall health and well-being of the community and the quality of life of its residents.

Since Darien's current POCD was adopted in 2006, much has changed. Therefore, it is appropriate that the community review the policies in the current POCD to ensure those policies are appropriate for the future.

*"If you don't
know where
you're going,
you'll wind up
somewhere
else."*

Yogi Berra,
Baseball Legend
Renowned Punster

Conservation
Strategies



Development
Strategies



Infrastructure
Strategies



Why Plan?

Darien is affected by events and trends in the region, the nation, and the world. Changes outside of our control in population, housing, the economy, transportation, utility, business and regulatory changes affect us.

In fact, we cannot stop change from happening.

In an increasingly hectic world, planning provides the opportunity to:

- * focus on the 'bigger picture' and identify significant goals,
- * promote overall values and achieve important purposes,
- * coordinate efforts and produce consistent results, and
- * achieve efficiency and economy in implementation.

Previous Darien Plans

- 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development
- 1995 Town Plan of Development
- 1984 Plan of Development
- 1967 Town Plan of Development
- 1954 Town Plan of Development

About Plans Of Conservation & Development

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a document whose purpose is to establish a common vision for the future of a community and then determine policies that will help attain that vision. While its key purpose and function is to address the physical development of a community, it will often address issues related to the economic development and social development.

The goals and recommendations of the Plan are intended to reflect an overall consensus of what is considered desirable for Darien and its residents in the future.

A Plan of Conservation and Development becomes an official document after a public hearing and adoption by the Darien Planning and Zoning Commission. Once adopted, the Plan is used to:

- coordinate conservation activities,
- guide land use decisions and regulations,
- program public projects, and
- meet identified public needs.

However, it is important to note that the Plan of Conservation and Development is primarily an advisory document. It is intended to guide local boards and commissions and to provide a framework for consistent decision-making with regard to conservation and development activities in Darien over the next decade or so.

While the statutory responsibility to adopt the Plan rests with the Planning and Zoning Commission, implementation will only occur with the diligent efforts of the residents and officials of the Town of Darien. The Plan will only be effective if it is understood and supported by the people of Darien, and implemented by local boards and commissions.

Prior Darien Plans

Darien has a history of preparing and adopting Plans of Development and these plans have:

- influenced the current development patterns and land use regulations and in Darien, and
- helped guide the overall conservation and development of the community.

Thus, it can be seen that Darien has prepared, adopted, and amended Plans to address the appropriate conservation and development of the community. It is in that spirit that this Plan will be prepared.

**EXCERPTS FROM CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES 8-23 –
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Commission shall:

- prepare, adopt and amend a plan of conservation and development ...
- review the plan of conservation and development at least once every ten years ...
- adopt such amendments to the plan or parts of the plan ... as the commission deems necessary to update the plan.

The Plan shall:

- be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality, ...
- show the commission's recommendation for the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial and other purposes and for the most desirable density of population in the ... parts of the municipality.
- be designed to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people.
- be made with reasonable consideration for restoration and protection of the ecosystem and habitat of Long Island Sound ...
- make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region ...
- promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households, and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs ...
- take into account the state plan of conservation and development ... and note any inconsistencies it may have with said state plan.
- consider the use of cluster development to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity.

The Plan may:

- show the commission's recommendation for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets and other public ways; for airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds; for general location, relocation and improvement of public buildings; for the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes; and for the extent and location of public housing projects.
- include recommended programs for the implementation of the plan ...
- (include) such other recommendations ... in the plan as will ... be beneficial to the municipality.

On Plans & Planning

"We must disabuse the public mind of the idea that a ... plan means a fixed record upon paper of a desire by some group of individuals prescribing, out of their wisdom and authority, where and how the more important changes and improvements in the physical layout of the (community) are to be made - a plan to be completed and put on file and followed more or less faithfully and mechanically, much as a contractor follows the architect's drawing for a house.

We must cultivate in our own minds and in the mind of the people the conception of the ... plan as a device or piece of administrative machinery for preparing, and keeping constantly up to date, a unified forecast and definition of important changes, additions, and extensions of the physical equipment and arrangement of the (community) which a sound judgment holds likely to become desirable and practicable in the course of time, so as to avoid so far as possible both ignorantly wasteful action and ignorantly wasteful inaction in the control of the (community's) physical growth.

It is a means by which those who become at any time responsible for decisions affecting the (community's) plan may be prevented from acting in ignorance of what their predecessors and their colleagues in other departments of (community) life have believed to be the reasonable contingencies."

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
Distinguished City Planner (1911)

Community Involvement

"Land use is perhaps the most complex and pervasive environmental issue of all. Pollution levels, agricultural productivity, housing patterns, and recreation are a few of the manifestations of how we use our land. But unlike many of the other environmental issues, there is no common scale upon which to measure progress towards good land use.

Planners can suggest some better ways to design and locate development; economists can tell us which patterns are most efficient from the point of view of land consumption, energy use, industrial location, etc.; and lawyers can advise on what is legal and constitutional in the way of land use regulations.

Yet it is really the community itself - whether locality, region, or state - which must try to pull all these considerations together into coherent land use planning and regulatory policies in order to preserve those things that the community values and to foster the growth and change that the community wants."

Russell W. Peterson
Former Executive Director
Environmental Protection
Agency

Planning Process For Darien

The process of preparing the Plan of Conservation and Development will be overseen and coordinated by a POCD Update Committee. Once the Committee has endorsed a recommended POCD, it will be forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Commission for official adoption. It is anticipated that adoption will occur in early 2016.

Overall though, the planning process has been designed to place emphasis on local input and involvement. Efforts will be made to encourage and consider input from Darien residents:

- Interviews will be held with different town agencies, department heads, and individuals, and
- Public meetings will be held to solicit input, generate discussion, and present recommendations.

Darien residents can participate in the planning process through providing input at public meetings. There is no better way to influence the Plan than to submit good insight and strategic recommendations to the POCD Update Committee and the Planning and Zoning Commission as the Plan is being prepared. Comments received during this process will be reviewed and included in the Plan of Conservation and Development, when appropriate.

Persons interested in participating in the process of assembling the Plan of Conservation & Development can review the booklets on different topics that will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission. These booklets will be available through the Town's website.

The intended result is that the Plan will represent a consensus by Darien residents about the future of their community. Final adoption of the Plan is the responsibility of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Following adoption of the Plan, attention will turn to implementation. While preparing a Plan of Conservation & Development may take one to two years, implementation may last for ten to twenty years. Implementation is the whole reason that we plan.

The steps anticipated as part of updating the Darien POCD are presented on the following pages.

Anticipated Workflow

1 Issues Scoping

Preparation / Material Review

- Meet with Town Staff
- Obtain relevant information from Town Staff
- Participate in a community tour with Town Staff
- Review current POCD
- Review other plans / studies / documents provided by the Town

Scoping Meeting With the Planning and Zoning Commission

- Meet with Planning and Zoning Commission to identify topics / issues the Commissioners feel should be a priority for the Plan

Board / Agency Questionnaires

- Circulate a survey / questionnaire to members of local boards and commissions
- Circulate a survey / questionnaire to Town department heads
- Review questionnaire responses

Public Scoping Workshop

- Facilitate one (1) interactive workshop for residents to identify and discuss significant current and future issues in Darien
- Assist Staff with invitation letters

On-Line Survey

- Replicate exercises from interactive workshop as an on-line survey

Conditions and Trends Review

- Review and assess information related to Darien, including demographics, housing, economic, fiscal data

Synthesize Input and Recommend Priority Issues and Topics

- Meet with the Planning and Zoning Commission to review the findings and discuss topic areas / issues to be addressed



Exercises



Sharing thoughts

2 Plan Review & Strategy Refinement

The second phase focuses on reviewing the existing Plan with the Planning and Zoning Commission and identifying appropriate strategies.

Plan Review

- With the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Staff, review the background data and the goals, policies and recommendations in the current Plan
- Conduct independent research on topics and issues
- Assist the Planning and Zoning Commission with refining and updating strategies to reflect anticipated community needs over the next 10 to 20 years
- Suggest possible policies and strategies undertaken by similar communities in Connecticut and elsewhere (provided such strategies are relevant to Darien)

Theme / Description	Possible Topics
Conservation How to protect and preserve the things important to Darien residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability / resiliency • Natural resources • Coastal resources / sea level rise • Open space • Historic resources • Community character • Community spirit
Development How to guide / manage growth and change in Darien	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown • Business development • Residential development • Housing diversity
Infrastructure How to provide facilities and services to support the type of community Darien wants to be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal facilities • Vehicular transportation • Parking • Sidewalks and trails • Bicycle routes • Transit • Utilities

It is understood that a separate parking study (Darien train station, commuter parking, downtown parking) is to be conducted by others for the Board of Selectmen (in their role as Parking Authority). It will likely be completed in 2015.

3 Plan Preparation & Adoption

The third phase focuses on preparing and adopting the POCD.

Plan Preparation and Refinement

- Prepare a first draft of the Plan (including maps)
- Review the first draft of the Plan with the Planning and Zoning Commission
- Based on Commission discussion, prepare an updated POCD (including updated maps)

Community Meeting(s)

- Organize and facilitate one (1) public meeting on the recommended Plan
- Present the recommended Plan for community feedback

Finalize Proposed Plan

- Meet with the Planning and Zoning Commission to review input and determine additional edits to the recommended Plan and maps
- Prepare the proposed Plan (including maps)



Plan Review Meeting



Plan Review Meeting

Public Hearing On Adoption

- Present the proposed Plan at the public hearing on adoption (1 meeting)

Planning and Zoning Commission Review

- Review public comments with the PZC and determine final edits to the proposed Plan and maps
- Assist the Planning and Zoning Commission with Plan adoption

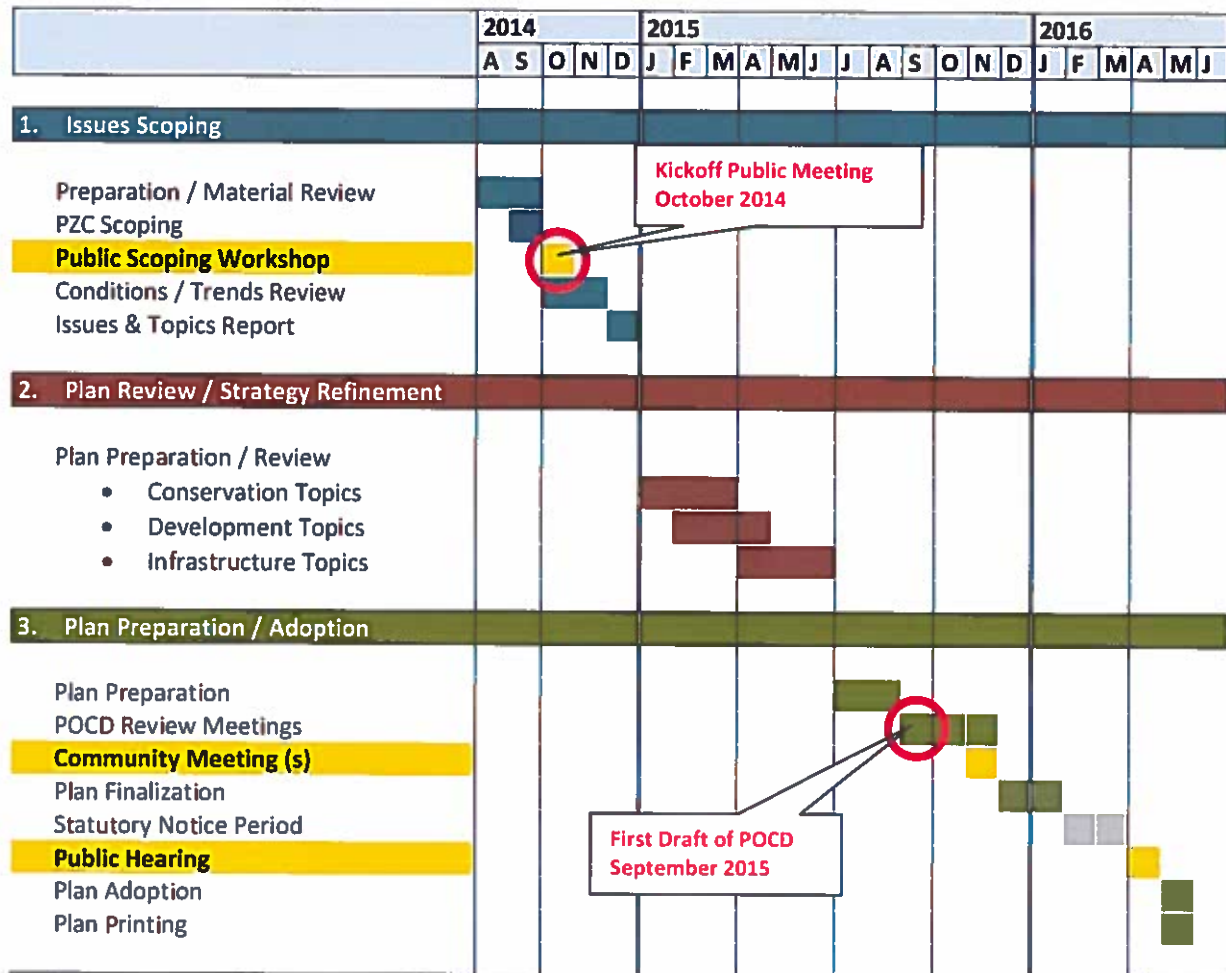
Plan Completion

- Prepare the adopted Plan and maps for final printing
- Deliver all materials to the Town upon project completion

**Public
Input**

**Public
Input**

Anticipated Schedule



At the end of Phase 1, it is anticipated that the Planning and Zoning Commission will determine whether additional professional assistance is desired for:

- Transportation Planning
- Telephone Survey
- LID / Drainage Evaluation
- Coastal Area Strategies
- Downtown Area Strategies
- Design Strategies

It is understood that funds have been or will be budgeted for this possibility.



Planimetrics

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